

## **Youth Drug Use Continues Downward Slide Older Adult Rates of Use Increase**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration today announced that current illicit drug use among youth ages 12-17 continues to decline. The rate has been moving downward from 11.6 percent using drugs in the past month in 2002 to 11.2 percent in 2003, 10.6 percent in 2004 and 9.9 percent in 2005. This initial report from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), released at the annual observance of National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month Observance, focuses on significant trends in substance abuse and mental health problems since 2002.

Similarly, the rate of current marijuana use among youth ages 12 to 17 declined significantly from 8.2 percent in 2002 to 6.8 percent in 2005, and the average age of first use of marijuana increased from under age 17 in 2003 to 17.4 years in 2005. Furthermore, drinking among teens declined, with 16.5 percent of youth ages 12-17 reporting current alcohol use and 9.9 percent reporting binge drinking. This compares with 17.6 percent of this age group reporting drinking in 2004 and 11.1 percent reporting binge drinking in the past month in 2004. These declines in alcohol use by youth, ages 12-17, follow years of relatively unchanged rates.

The baby boomer generation presents a different story. Among adults aged 50 to 59, the rate of current illicit drug use increased from 2.7 percent to 4.4 percent between 2002 and 2005, reflecting the aging into this age group - the baby boom cohort.

"The trends among young people are encouraging," said Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt. "We know prevention activities must start with our children. There is more to be done and we must build on our work to ensure that children and their parents understand that they must live free of drugs and alcohol to be healthy."

"Something important is happening with American teens," said John P. Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "They are getting the message that using drugs limits their futures, and they are turning away from the destructive patterns and cruelly-misinformed perceptions about substance abuse that have so damaged previous generations."

"The news today is there is a fundamental shift in drug use among young people in America," said Assistant Surgeon General Eric B. Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H., SAMHSA Acting Deputy Administrator. "We first saw this shift towards healthier decisions when rates of tobacco use among young people began to go down. Now, we see a sustained drop in rates of drug use. We will see if the decline in drinking among 12 to 17 years olds becomes a continued pattern as well."

For young adults, ages 18-25, the picture is mixed. While there were no significant changes in overall past month use of any illicit drugs in this age group between 2002 and 2005, cocaine use increased from 2.0 in 2002 to 2.6 percent in 2005. Past-month non-medical use of prescription drugs among young adults increased from 5.4 percent in 2002 to 6.3 percent in 2005, due largely to an increase in the non-medical use of narcotic pain relievers. The rate was 4.1 percent in 2002 and 4.7 percent in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

## Marijuana

The survey shows there were 14.6 million past month users of marijuana in 2005. Among those ages 12 and older, the rate of past-month marijuana use was about the same in 2005 (6.0 percent) as in 2004 (6.1 percent), 2003 (6.2 percent) and 2002 (6.2 percent).

## Prescription Drugs

There were 6.4 million persons ages 12 or older (2.6 percent) who used prescription drugs non-medically in the past month. Of these, 4.7 million used narcotic pain relievers, 1.8 million used tranquilizers, 1.1 million used stimulants (including 512,000 who used methamphetamine) and 272,000 used sedatives. Each of these estimates is similar to the estimates for 2004.

Those who used prescription drugs non-medically were asked how they obtained the drugs they used most recently. In 2005, the prevalent source for drugs used non-medically was “from a friend or relative for free” (59.8 percent). Another 16.8 percent reported getting the drug from one doctor, while 4.3 percent reported getting narcotic pain relievers from a drug dealer or other stranger, and 0.8 percent reported buying the drug on the internet.

## Methamphetamine

From 2002 to 2005, decreases were seen in lifetime (5.3 to 4.3 percent) and past year (0.7 to 0.5 percent) methamphetamine use, but not past month use (0.3 percent in 2002 vs. 0.2 percent in 2005) for those aged 12 or older. Although the number of past month users has remained steady since 2002, the number of methamphetamine users who were dependent on or abused some illicit drug did rise significantly during this period, from 164,000 in 2002 to 257,000 in 2005

The number of recent new users of methamphetamine, aged 12 or older, was 192,000 in 2005. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of methamphetamine initiates remained steady at around 300,000 per year, but there was a decline from 2004 (318,000 initiates) to 2005.

## Cocaine

The rate of cocaine use was not statistically different between 2004 and 2005 (0.8 percent to 1.0 percent) and has remained unchanged since 2002.

## Heroin

There was no significant change in the number of current heroin users in 2005 (136,000), nor in the rate of heroin use (0.1 percent), compared with estimates from 2004, 2003, and 2002.

## Alcohol

More than one fifth (22.7 percent) of persons ages 12 and older participated in binge drinking in 2005, defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least one day in the 30 days prior to being surveyed. This translates as about 55 million people, comparable to the 2004 estimate. The binge drinking rate among young adults ages 18-25 was 41.9 percent, and the heavy drinking rate was 15.3 percent.

In 2005, 6.6 percent of the population ages 12 and older (16 million people) engaged in heavy drinking. This rate is similar to the reported rate of 6.9 percent in 2004. Heavy drinking is defined as binge drinking on at least five days in the past 30 days.

About 10.8 million persons ages 12-20 (28.2 percent) reported past month alcohol use in 2005. Nearly 7.2 million of these underage drinkers (18.8 percent) were binge drinkers and 2.3 million (6.0) were heavy drinkers. These figures have remained essentially the same since 2002. Most of the new initiates to alcohol use (88.9 percent) were younger than 21 at the time of initiation.

### Tobacco

In 2005 there were an estimated 71.5 million Americans ages 12 and older who were current users of a tobacco product. Of these 60.5 million were current cigarette smokers; 13.6 million smoked cigars; 7.7 million used smokeless tobacco; and 2.2 million smoked tobacco in pipes. Between the years 2002 and 2005 past-month use of a tobacco product declined from 30.4 percent to 29.4 percent, and past-month cigarette use decreased from 26.0 percent to 24.9 percent.

The rate of past month cigarette use among youth ages 12-17 declined from 13.0 percent in 2002 to 10.8 percent in 2005. There were also declines in use of cigars in this age group.

### Prevention Measures

Current marijuana use was much less prevalent among youths who perceived strong parental disapproval for trying marijuana or hashish once or twice than for those who did not (4.6 percent vs. 27.0 percent). Over 90 percent of youths report that their parents would strongly disapprove of this behavior.

### Substance Dependence or Abuse

In 2005, an estimated 22.2 million persons (9.1 percent of the population ages 12 and older) were classified with substance dependence or abuse in the past year, based on criteria specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM-IV). Of these, 3.3 million were dependent on or abused both alcohol and illicit drugs; 3.6 million were dependent on or abused illicit drugs but not alcohol; and 15.4 million were dependent on or abused alcohol, but not illicit drugs. These numbers are basically unchanged since 2002.

There were 2.3 million people who received treatment at a specialty facility in 2005. There were 1.2 million persons who reported that they felt they needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem, but of these 865,000 reported making no effort to get treatment. There were 296,000 who reported they had made an effort to get treatment. These numbers were not statistically different from the numbers in the 2004 survey.

Adults ages 21 or older who had first used alcohol before age 21 were almost 5 times more likely than adults who had their first drink at age 21 or older to be classified with alcohol dependence or abuse (9.6 percent compared to 2.1 percent).

### **Driving Under the Influence**

In 2005, an estimated 13.0 percent of persons ages 12 and older (31.7 million persons) drove under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past year. This percentage has dropped since 2002, when it was 14.2 percent.

### **Co-occurring Substance Use and Serious Psychological Distress**

Serious psychological distress, as measured by the survey administered to adults ages 18 and older, was associated with past year substance dependence or abuse in 2005. Among the 24.6 million adults with serious psychological distress in 2005, 21.3 percent (5.2 million) were dependent on or abused illicit drugs or alcohol. The rate of substance dependence or abuse among adults without serious psychological distress was 7.7 percent (14.9 million people).

Among the 5.2 million adults with both serious psychological distress and substance dependence or abuse in 2005, 47 percent received mental health treatment or substance use treatment at a specialty facility; 8.5 percent received both treatment for mental health and substance use disorder, 34.3 percent received only treatment for mental health problems, and 4.1 percent received only specialty substance use treatment.

### **Depression**

There were 30.8 million adults who had at least one major depressive episode in their lifetime, and 15.8 million adults (7.3 percent of persons ages 18 and older) who reported a major depressive episode in the past year. This is a statistically significant decline from 17.1 million adults (8 percent) reporting past year major depressive episodes in 2004.

Having a major depressive episode in the past year was associated with past year substance dependence or abuse. Among adults in 2005, 19.9 percent were dependent on or abused alcohol or illicit drugs, while among persons without a major depressive episode only 8.4 percent were dependent on or abused alcohol or illicit drugs.

In 2005 there were 3.4 million youths ages 12 to 17 (13.7 percent of that population) who had at least one major depressive episode in their lifetimes and 2.2 million youths (8.8 percent) who had a major depressive episode during the past year. The occurrence of a major depressive episode in the past year among youths ages 12 to 17 was associated with a higher prevalence of illicit drug or alcohol dependence or abuse (19.8 percent). This compares to 6.9 percent for youths who did not report past-year major depressive episodes.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is an annual survey of approximately 67,500 people. The survey collects information from residents of households, residents of non-institutionalized group quarters and civilians living on military bases.

Recovery Month is observed in September to recognize the accomplishments of people in recovery, the contributions of treatment providers, and advances in substance abuse treatment. This year is the 17th annual observance. The theme “Join the Voices for Recovery – Build a Stronger, Healthier Community” emphasizes that addiction to alcohol and drugs is a chronic, but treatable, public health problem that affects everyone in the community.

**The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is available on the web at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/>. Electronic versions of Recovery Month materials are available at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).**